Creativity, self-reflection and subversion

Creativity, self-reflection and subversion: poetry writing for Global Englishes awareness raising

Abstract

The current study evaluates the outcomes of a pedagogical task designed to support creative writing pedagogies for second language students and to encourage self-reflection and self-exploration of English. The emancipatory potential and promotion of active learning was seen as conducive to a Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework in which the course was embedded. Participants were EAP students at a Japanese university, where EAP content utilised Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) subject matter. Poem writing tasks were introduced to develop learners' creative writing skills, individual voice and confidence as multicompetent language users. Analysis of the poems revealed that the task encouraged both self-reflection and creativity and offered opportunities for poetic subversion against the centripetal discourses of English. Through creative play with poetic expression, learners manipulated conventional imagery into original expressions of their own experiences, demonstrating how writing poems had an empowering effect against questions that surround global English language use. Through their poems, learners showed a positive attitude towards English, without giving up their own cultural strengths and individual positions.

Keywords: creativity; Global Englishes; voice; multilingualism; multicompetence; identity

1. Introduction

Dear Inner circle

My English is samurai
My English is sushi
My English is sumo
My English is Tokyo
I'm not gonna follow your English, OK?
My English is Jinglish.
(Poem 107)

Creativity is considered a unique human trait, along with the ability to use a complex semiotic system, such as language, meaningfully (e.g. Sawyer, 2012; Halliday, 1993). Creative language production, therefore, seems to be written into the code, as e.g. Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar perspective of infinite original utterances proposes (Chomsky, 1965). On the obverse side of Chomsky's rule-based scheme is the conception of language as a complex dynamic system that allows for improvised and unpredictable, i.e. creative, performances (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; also Cameron and Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Both paradigms, despite emphasising creative freedoms, work mainly within structural constraints, and it is this tension between the individual unpredictability of language use against the "conservative forces for system maintenance" (Tarone, 2000, p. 33) that is seen to propel linguistic creative competence.

Creative competence in general has, as Reckwitz (2017) notes, now attained the position of a "social imperative", at least in the West. The perceived evolution of a 'conceptual age' taking over from the 'knowledge economy' places creativity centre-stage (e.g. Pink, 2005) and it is widely invoked in educational discourses (Allison, 2004). Education institutions, therefore, increasingly value 'creativity' as a main graduate attribute. It follows that the role of creativity in learning has now become a significant topic of interest.

The 2007 Open University seminar series 'Transitions and Transformations', and the special edition of *Applied Linguistics* on Creativity and Language Learning in the same year, encouraged investigations into creativity in the second language classroom as the space where macro-level considerations of the social and economic importance of creativity intersect with micro-level interests in the processes of second language acquisition, and the self-shaping of the language learner in terms of self-reflection.

Creativity in language use has also received increased attention within the field of Global Englishes, where research showcases the pluricentricity of English in today's globalised world. Global Englishes researchers position multilingual language users as having an integrated proficiency that allows for creativity. Such research shows how language users do not always conform to a fixed, 'native' and 'standardised' grammatical system. Instead, 'native' English norms are open to negotiation, reconstruction and subversion. Canagarajah (2006) argues, therefore, for a 'negotiation model' of language practice in which multilingual learners make strategic choices about language use. Hence, learners are not 'deficient', but rather creative language users. Indeed, Kachru (1985, p. 20) used the term "bilinguals' creativity" to refer to such creative linguistic processes, and Seidlhofer (2011, p. 103) emphasizes the "complementary relationship between creativity and conformity with ELF [English as a Lingua Franca] users exploiting the alternative encoding possibilities inherent in the language".

Recent years have witnessed an increased focus on the pedagogical implications of Global Englishes research (see Other and Author 2 for an overview). However, while recent publications include lesson plans (Author2 & Other, xx; Author2, xx; Matsuda, 2012) and despite the growing body of classroom-based studies showcasing the use of different activities and methods to introduce GELT (Author 2, xxx, xxx; Author 2 and Other,

xxx;xxx;xxx;xxx; Other and Author 2, xxx), debates over the need for a paradigm shift away from fixed 'native' norms in the ELT classroom remain largely at the theoretical level. The research we report on aims to showcase an innovative pedagogical task introduced as part of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course (see Rose and Montakantiwong, 2018 on replacing elements of an existing EAP syllabus with Global Englishes content). The study provides insights into the potential of poetry writing as a creative means to reflect critically on the global spread of English . We hypothesise that poems enable learners to develop voice and confidence as English users, foster a positive identity as a legitimate speaker of a global language and subvert native-speaker norms.

2. Literature, Creativity and Language Learning

Multilingualism, symbolic competence and bilinguals' creativity

Allison (2004) points out that within the field of EAP discussions of students' academic writing largely take place without reference to creativity. He notes, however, that those who criticise EAP as being 'accommodationist' (cf. Benesch, 1993, 2001) should not overlook those occasional instances of creativity being discussed. The main lines of investigation into creativity and language learning commonly work along established binaries, which include e.g. original self-expression and social convention. These binaries are often pigeon-holed as belonging either to the big 'C' or small 'c' category (Boden, 2004), i.e. Creativity as expression of individual genius, or creativity as common and everyday (cf. Carter, 1996). To avoid these binaries, however, Carter (2011) also suggests a dynamic and emergent nature of creativity that extends to multilingual and inter-cultural contexts. The point of interest, therefore, lies in the hiatus between these binaries, as it is the dialogic struggle of the

language learner between self-affirmation and self-subjugation to another linguistic system that provokes insights into the processes of learning and creativity.

It is thus no accident that Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic underpins many analyses on creativity and language learning (e.g. Tarone, 2000). Centred around concepts such as 'polyphony', 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism' (Bakhtin, 1981), Bakhtin offers a framework that provides spaces for learners' voices to emerge. At the same time, learners still have to struggle against the centripetal discourse of the language to be learned. The heteroglossic use of a second language as a creative tool is thus simultaneously opportunity to subvert as well as limitation.

Multilingualism, "the topic du jour – at least in critical applied linguistics" (May, 2014), provides the necessary cognitive dynamism for such a creative and subversive language user. Kharkhurin (2015) shows how the richness and flexibility of the multilinguals' linguistic memory allows the extension of cognitive functions through an increased spread of activation, thus unlocking greater creative potential (462). The many proficiencies of multilinguals, e.g. cognitive, communicative, intercultural and symbolic competences, accordingly, fuel current understandings of second-language learners as multicompetent, pluriliterate and self-reflective (V. Cook, 2009). This need to acknowledge multilingualism has instigated calls for a paradigm shift away from monolingual, 'native' English norms in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly with calls for a movement towards Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) (Author 2, xxx; Author 2 and other, xxx; Other and Author 2, xxx) to make the classroom relevant to ELF users in today's globalised world. Rather than using a 'deficit model' of conservative pedagogy, in which learners lack proficiency, GELT admits learners as active and creative manipulators of language. Creative play is thus clearly conducive to GELT, empowering learners as 'users' of language, acknowledging their multiple linguistic and cognitive resources and emancipating

them to draw on these resources creatively. However, no studies to date have examined how this can be used in a GELT class.

Kramsch (2006) similarly problematises the deficit model under the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) paradigm. She stipulates that it does not account for learners' 'symbolic competence' (p. 251), which they deploy to become self-reflective and creative negotiators of meaning. This symbolic dimension, lacking in the normally regulated and somewhat mechanistic information exchanges in CLT classrooms, is also highlighted by Sullivan (2000). She reports on a lesson that utilises the power of playful storytelling, mirroring authentic, socially-mediated language production in the learners, rather than negotiating transactional information-gaps common in 'traditional' CLT classrooms. CLT has been cited "as the most significant development within ELT over the last 50 years. It is generally regarded as a clear paradigmatic break with the past" (Hall, 2016, p. 214). As Other and Author 2 (xxx) note, the field of ELT certainly experienced a paradigm shift 'when communicativeness was brought to the forefront of language education' (p. xx). Yet CLT did not change the focus on fixed 'native' English norms. In 'communicative' classrooms, materials, and assessments, the 'real' world continues to be the 'native' speaker world.

Cook (2000) calls these the 'discourses of the bulge' (158), which encompasses all language practices that are considered instrumental to an effective performance in the 'real' world, and selectively edits out any practices considered marginal to these discourses, such as playful discourses. Play involves negotiating aspects of intimacy and power, and deals with subversive and controversial subject matter expunged from most ELT materials. Creative language play, therefore, adds an important dimension to these orthodoxies of the communicative approach, such as self-reflection and subversion that ignore a wide range of other communicative repertoires. Prodromou (2007) shows in his spoken corpus study how these repertoires are commonly interpreted as errors. The conscious rather than subliminal

workings of idioms produced by learners, the 'too literal' interpretation of words rooted in the cultural heritage of a particular speech community, the simple 'oddity' of hearing metaphorical language out of the mouth of learners, makes this an area in which fluency and accuracy in language production clashes with a more self-reflective voice.

As Prodromou notes, the success of learner creativity depends on the collaborative efforts of the interlocutor, and collaboration and accommodation are established features of interaction in inter-cultural situations (Pitzl, 2012), as is the flexible use of second language that allows for ad-hoc accommodations (Tarone, 2000). Creative language use, therefore, can point the way to linguistic expertise grounded in metalinguistic awareness and multicompetences. Multicompetences of multilinguals are certainly relevant in *lingua franca* contexts, in which the subversion and contestation of language norms is common practice (Jones, 2010). It is this use of the language, that differs from the static 'native' variety presented in 'traditional' ELT, that has led to an increasing number of calls to ensure 21st century ELT classroom reflects how the language functions as a global lingua franca outside of the classroom (Author 2 and Other, xxx; Other and Author 2, xxx). But, Prodromou (2003) suggested earlier, idiomaticity, of which metaphor use is a key aspect, is still considered the 'acid-test' of second-language competence, where conformity to established norms is rewarded and creativity punished, i.e. learners are reminded of the 'correct' use of English even though they consciously adopt a subversive expression.

So-called contact literatures, however, writings that transfer such subversive linguistic devices, strategies and conventions of first languages to writing in English as a second or other language (Kachru, 1983) may, according to Gang Sui (2015), revitalise and localise English in these contexts. Kachru's (2005) 'bilinguals' creativity', and the creative success of New Englishes writers, can thus be motivating for language learners, showing how literary codeswitching can be a strategic and creative act of self-reflection. It is thus the case

that engaging with literature not only provides engaging, linguistically rich, authentic input for learners, but also space for the creative extension of learners' voice, because the 'deviant' uses of language in literary texts broadens their idea of 'correctness' (Lazar, 2015, p. 471).

It can also provide legitimacy for learners' own language production. Creativity lives in the tension between the fixity of accurate 'native-like' expression promoted in 'traditional' approaches to ELT, and the conscious breaking of rules to create something new or innovative. The rogue act of 'ventriloquism' through creative language use, another Bakhtinian term, emancipates learners through the opportunity for 'double voicing' their identity. Engaging with literature in the second language classroom, therefore, provides an opportunity to enhance the creative faculties of the learner (Hall, 2005, p. 16) as a way to encourage self-reflection and subversion, which is clearly conducive to GELT that promotes learners as active users of the language.

Creative Pedagogies and Research into their Outcomes

As we have established, creativity, literature and language learning form a productive bind in the second language classroom, but how creativity is facilitated, i.e. what activities are provided to learners needs further consideration. An ideal creative writing pedagogy centres on activities in which intrinsically-motivated learners are allowed the space and time to express their voice and create. Such a pedagogy is poetry-writing, as it is explicitly about self-reflection that is stimulated in a variety of ways. Kachru (1985), for example, has devised a pedagogy in which close linguistic analysis is paired with literary explication. Learners are thus encouraged to notice expressive target-language strategies and translate these into their own writing. Maxim (2006) has formulated five pedagogical tenets that deemphasise target-language models and enable learners' identities and voices to be negotiated though poetic language play (252). Hanauer (2014) similarly emphasises the

humanising and emancipating function of creative writing that allows the individualised voice of the learner to emerge. He focuses on the 'unusualness' of the learners' voices that have the potential to develop the language further in aesthetic and affective communication (13). Disney (2014) conceives of language as ideal for playful manipulation. Like Hanauer's pedagogy of self-expression, Disney encourages his learners to put their 'self' into their writing, and, like Hanauer, he emphasises the fact that learners are capable of abstraction and meaning-making that is inherently aesthetic. Spiro (2015), finally, stresses the empowering ownership of the creative writing product but highlights how this is not only evident in the writing of poetry, but also in the active reading and critical engagement with poems. An important part of any creative writing pedagogy, therefore, is the idea of first analysing, then 're-writing,' an existing text (Maley, 1996, pp. 109 – 113). Self-reflection is thus written into creative writing pedagogies, as re-writing fosters in learners not only engagement with an original text, but also a self-conscious querying of their own choices. Such a pedagogy forms the context of our investigation.

Through "the joyful business of discovery" (Sihui, 1996, p. 168) learners develop linguistic and cultural competencies that are well-scaffolded by the original text. This de-coupling of creativity from originality is significant for second language learning, as it affords creative techniques by which learners 're-articulate' the language they learn. Understood through Bakhtinian notions of ventriloquising, language is, in any case, extensively 'pre-fabricated'. Pennycook (2007) considers re-writing as renewal, as each repetition brings with it an unsettling of context. Toolan (2012) similarly posits that repetition, or re-writing, may look un-creative, but can, however, play on the shift in context (incongruence) that comes from the repeated language (e.g. irony) (23). Hence, re-writing "is central to creativeness" (17) as a tool for subversion.

Subversion is rooted in understanding of the source text. Timuçin (2010) draws on stylistics as a detailed and explicit method of scrutinising texts, aiming to develop language awareness of e.g. metaphors, patternings and particular lexis. On the other hand, Mattix (2001) emphasises the affective realm of reading poetry, in which pleasure and understanding go hand in hand. Hence, Hall (2003) suggests, Hanauer's idea of 'understanding poetry' and close-readings can resemble typical comprehension work with texts. Hall instead considers the need for poetry reading to be 'dialogic', in that emotions, pleasure and real interest in what is being read, needs to be coupled with the joy of unravelling meaning by close focus on form. Such self-reflective reading individualises and contextualises the texts and "engage[s] both feelings *and* intellect" (398). This concept of 'meaningful literacy' (Hanauer 2012) pays tribute to the "living, thinking, experiencing and feeling person" (106). Hanauer's corpus of second-language poems reveals that many of the poems produced by learners are indeed repositories of self-reflection, expressed in direct and immediate language. Hanauer's work as a whole supports our hypothesis that creative writing facilitates the expression of a learners' individual self-reflective voice, which implies that language pedagogies should consider this, rather than push for the replication of undistinguished, native-like voices in their writing methodologies.

Hence we see our project in line with other studies, such as Liao (2017), who endorses the idea that writing poetry in the second language classroom 'humanises' it and creates confident multilingual writers. For most researchers, this connection between form and affect in poetry becomes their focus for exploration. Chamcharatsri's 2013 study, for example, underpins the idea that using emotional resources and fostering self-expression brings with it a heightened metalinguistic awareness. She concludes that "emotional expression is […] the *heart* of language learning and language teaching" (155). In contrast, Tin et al's (2010) research in Indonesian classrooms finds that poems that were deemed most

creative are those that talk about the daily lives of the readers and convey this honestly and truthfully (rather than emotionally). This diversion demonstrates that self-reflection need not simply be playful or elaborate, but can include creative statements whose subversive nature lies in their power to communicate an individual experience.

The above studies intimate that words in poetry are not just lexical items to be mastered, but local experiences to be related. The affective power of poetry to speak directly of personal experience encourages risk-taking behaviour (Cranston, 2003, p. 955), because it allows space to overcome narrowly defined competencies based on the native speaker model (Pomerantz and Bell, 2007). This space is especially poignant in cultures that normally eschew linguistic risks due to losing face, such as Japan. Hence, poetry writing is a valuable mode for transformative, empowering and subversive practices (Newfield and D'Abdon, 2015), practices that work through a multimodal channel that includes reception *and* production, given that it is the performative and embodied nature of the spoken word that encourages identification, participation, individual growth and self-discovery. Iida (2017), for example, uses haiku writing with remedial and lower-level learners that allows them to construct their own voice and he argues that it can encourage even remedial students "to craft voice, articulate self, and ultimately develop a sense of authorship in L2 writing" (269). It is this voice that we were interested to find it the poems from our learners.

Creativity, Self-reflection and Subversion

Hanauer (2003) suggests that the power of poetry, as a potent transformative and emancipatory weapon in the language learners' arsenal, lies in its inherent possibility for deviance as an expression of uniqueness. Tin's 2015 study finds that creative writing flourishes against constraints of form, which triggers richer and unexpected language. This suggests that poetry writing, with its formal constraints but loose task framework, would be

an appropriate approach to encourage learners to produce creative language. This is clearly conducive to a GELT course embedded within an EAP course that aims to not only teach academic skills in English, but also encourage creativity. In this course, 'deviance' from static 'native' English norms was not seen as a sign of deficiency. Pedagogical studies that question writing norms are a first step towards "emancipation from cultural and linguistic ethnocentricity" (Kachru, 1985, p. 26). Poetry, Kachru states, speaks to the diversity of the pluralised society and the multicultural experience of language learners (ibid, p. 78). In that sense creative writing celebrates authorship and self-reflection, which allows learners to negotiate what Kramsch calls a 'textual self' (Kramsch and Lam, 1999).

When discussing the need for a paradigm shift in the field of ELT, a number of proposals for change have been identified in the literature (Author 2 and Other, xxx; Other and Author 2, xxx) including the need to both raise students' awareness of the use of English from a variety of lingua-cultural backgrounds, but also to encourage them to critically reflect on the global spread of the English language. It was the potential for poetry to encourage critical reflection on the global spread of English and allow for more creativity, in both their writing and with the language itself that prompted the use of poetry writing in the class we report on here, and the analysis of the poems that were produced.

This focus on poetry as a creative product conforms to what Maley and Kiss (2018), in their extensive overview of creativity and language learning, have critiqued as a dominant mode of investigation. Despite calls for this to be remedied, (e.g. Tin, 2015), it is nevertheless valuable to consider the creative (end)product, i.e. the poems written by language learners, as evidence for learners' self-reflective voices and identities that are negotiated in a second language.

The learners in the study we report on here were actively encouraged to engage with and re-write English texts and poems, as a first step towards establishing their own voice and their

confidence as legitimate users of a global lingua franca. We examined their poems for evidence of what the literature has stipulated as multicompetent users of English. This multicompetence was framed in terms of their ability to be creative, self-reflective and subversive towards the norms of English. The methodology used was corpus analysis. Corpus analysis, and especially frequency counts and concordances, is a common methodology used in investigating bilingual creativity. As Hanauer's 2010 studies have indicated, learners' poems yield fruitful data as to how leaners have deployed their voice as a means of self-reflection and subversion.

3. The study

3.1 Research Question

1. Can poems provide a means to show creative self-reflection about the global spread of English?
2. In what ways can they provide a means of emancipation from 'native' English norms in their use of metaphorical language?

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were English majors taking an elective EAP course embedded within a GELT course at a private Japanese university. They were 3rd and 4th year students, who had all been educated in the Japanese school system, which positions General American English as the norm (Matsuda, 2003). The English proficiency of students was B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference, although many bordered on B1 level and most of their classes were delivered in English. Both the university and the Japanese context were chosen due to the fact that one of the authors was living and working there. However, due to the growth in English Medium Instruction (EMI), and subsequent EAP courses, in Japan, the

results of the study may be of interest to those working in other contexts. Japan also offers an interesting site to explore the global spread of English due to the ever-increasing use of English internally. Despite being a traditionally English as a 'foreign' language context, EMI provision is on the rise, particularly in the tertiary sector.

3.3 Research methods

The EAP course (for an overview of the course see Author 2 xxx) was an elective course for 3rd and 4th year students. It aimed to raise students' awareness of Global Englishes and increase their confidence as legitimate speakers of a global language. It reflected the university's goal of offering more content-based and EAP courses in English to reflect the growing trend towards EMI. While EAP courses often aim to prepare learners to study in 'native' English speaking contexts, the aim of this course was to raise their awareness of Global Englishes through EAP content (see Author 2, xxx for an overview) to both improve their academic skills in English and also prepare them to use English as a global lingua franca. Reading, writing, listening and speaking materials utilised Global Englishes subject matter to teach EAP skills. It was taught twice a week for 13 weeks over four consecutive university semesters. 108 students were involved in the study.

Participation in the study was voluntary, ethical consent was obtained and data was collected unobtrusively. The poems were used as a pedagogic activity, as part of the writing strand of the EAP curriculum, following on from a listening and speaking skills module on the advantages and disadvantages of the global spread of English. When writing the poems, they were asked to reflect on their thoughts on the spread and the role of the English language. As an EMI course, students were required to submit poems in English. The task followed a debate over the advantages and disadvantages of the global spread of English and an examination of New Englishes creative writing. They were introduced to the concept of

metaphors and similes, examining and discussing several examples not related to the topic of the English language. In alignment with earlier studies on poetry writing in the second language classroom, they were invited to write poems on any topic related to the course, such as the historical spread of English, the advantages and disadvantages of having a global lingua franca, the use of English in their context and their own experiences of both learning and using English.

The hand-written poems were converted into electronic text files and imported into a corpus using AntConc 3.5.7., a free corpus software that allows the investigation of natural language samples, displaying word frequencies (x) and collocations, as is the common method employed in stylistics. The corpus of 108 poems amounts to 5131 word tokens, which makes this a small, specialised corpus.

3.4 Ethical Issues

One of the researchers, who collected the data, taught the EAP course. The other researcher, who is not familiar with the learners, analysed the data. All identifying names of the learners, who gave written permission for their writing to be used for research purposes, were excised.

4. Results

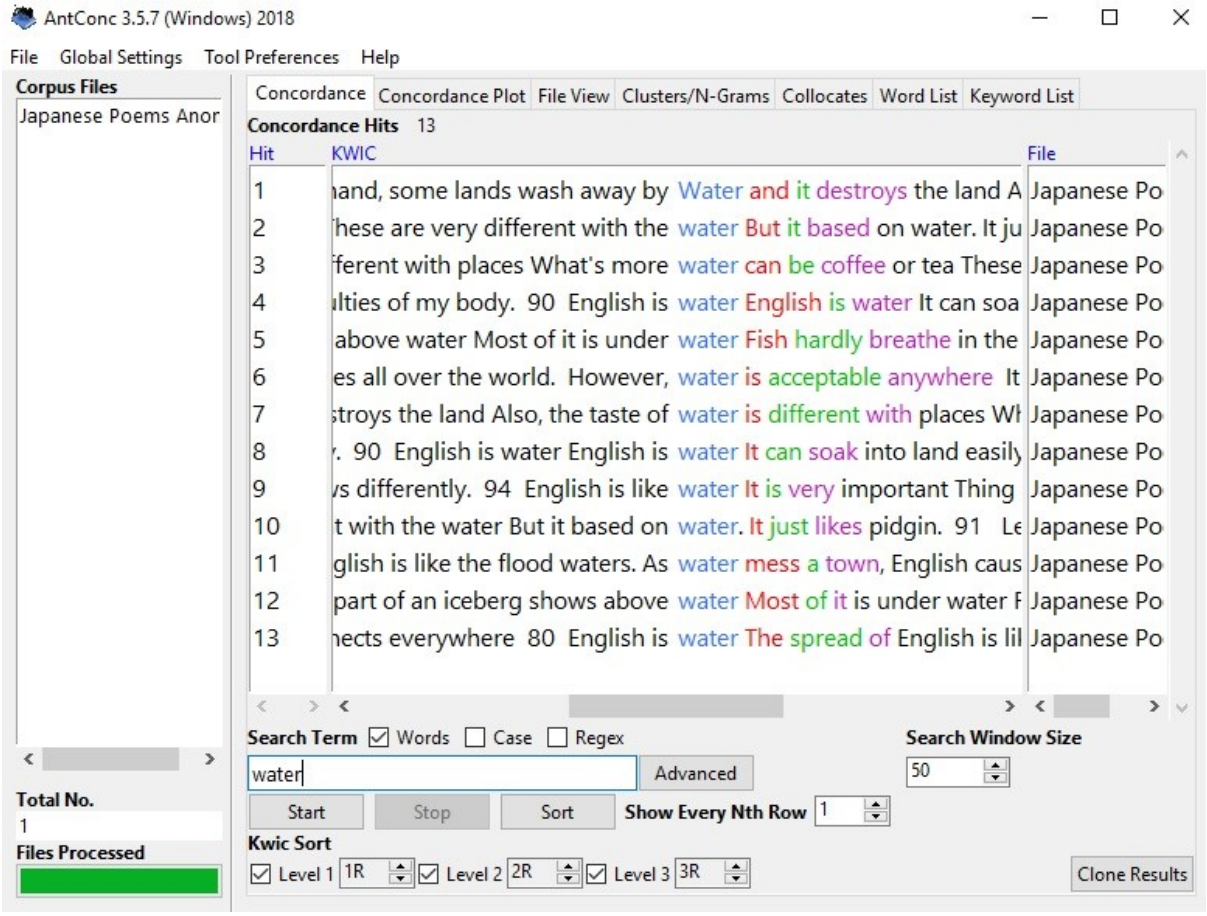
4.1 Corpus analysis through frequency counts and concordances

4.1.1 Use of Metaphors: Frequency

Metaphors were chosen as the unit of investigation, because the task demanded learners to use these features. More importantly, however, as a feature of idiomatic language metaphors are, as Prodromou (2003) summarised, frequently the shibboleth by which only ‘native’ use is accepted. In addressing the question ‘Can poems provide a means to show creative self-

reflection about the global spread of English?' we found that the poems reveal a range of common conceptual metaphors and metonymic uses of 'English'. English is variously portrayed as 'bridge' (11), 'tool' (10), 'door' (4) or 'key' (3), indicating its perception as economic enabler and global commodity. It also refers to the potential of making or having 'friends' (17) and communicating across the globe (10). Less conventional are high-frequency metaphors such as 'colour' (16) and 'water' (13).

Figure 1: Concordance lines for 'water'

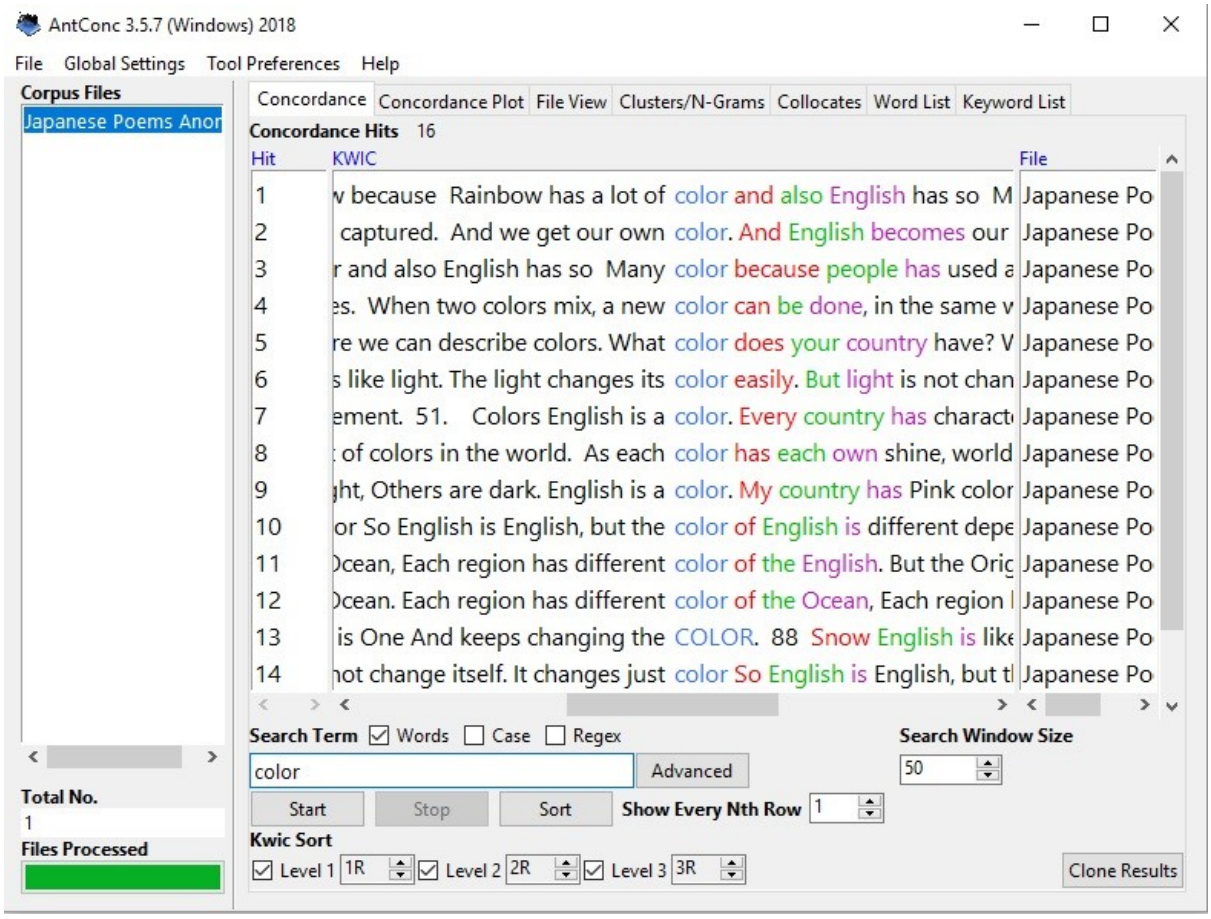


As *figure 1* demonstrates, the quality that students value in water is, on the one hand, its immersive, essential and universal quality. This extends to other related images, e.g. English as 'snow' (5) and 'river' (5). Yet, learners are also showing a subtle critique of English as

threatening and insidious. It can suffocate and destroy, which reveals English as a potential natural disaster.

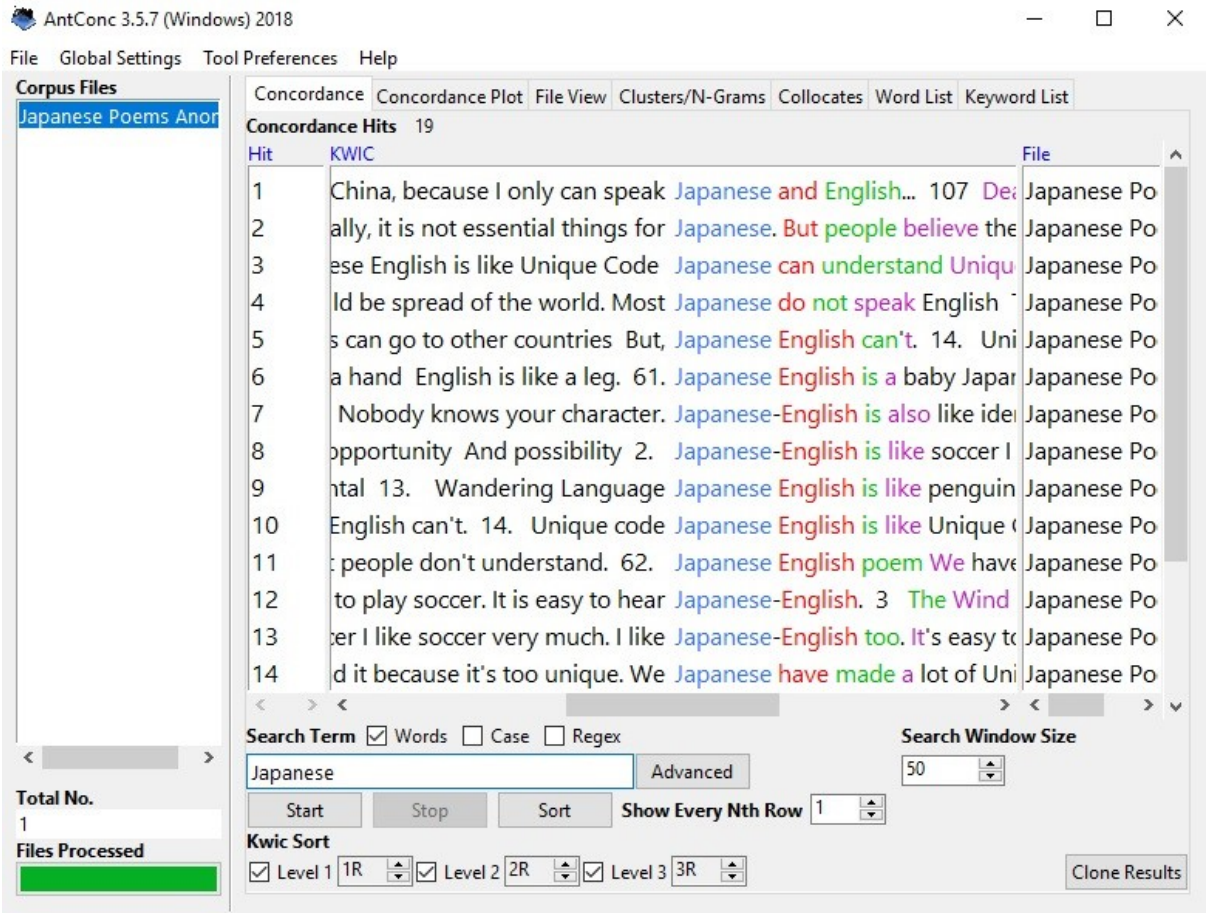
In terms of the idea of 'colour' (see *figure 2*), learners emphasise the changing quality of colour and its many shades. This opens up the possibility of difference, and difference can reflect oppositions. Hence the idea of 'my' and 'own' colour is in tension with ideas in which light provides a nuanced perception of colour that is not inherent in the thing itself. Overall learners are attuned to the fact that English is not a homogeneous language and has many 'colours', but that it is still different from their own language. This is also indicated by the relatively high occurrence of 'character' (10), signifying a dialectic of individuality and difference.

Figure 2: Concordance lines for 'colour'



The prevalent idea of difference between English and their own language is also indicated by the high frequency with which learners refer to Japan (9) and Japanese (19). As the concordance lines show, what is notable is the fact that English and Japanese occur frequently together, forming a hybrid English-Japanese identity (see *figure 3*).

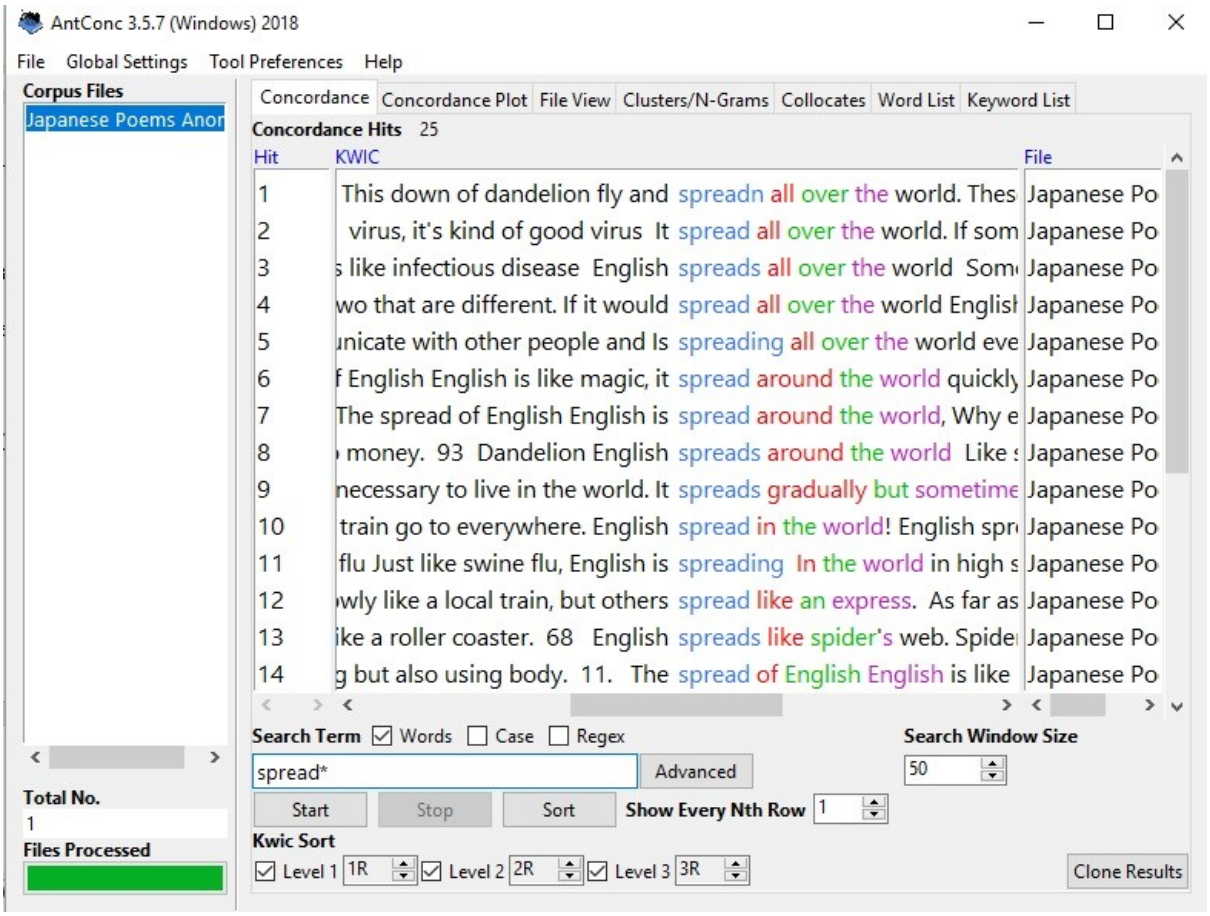
Figure 3: Concordance lines of 'Japanese'



A specific metaphor is that of English as food or ingredient. It sustains and can be mixed according to different recipes. Yet again an undertone of cultural threat can be detected, as the food mentioned is unhealthy and culturally distant (chocolate, cheese, pizza, coke, MacDonald's).

The idea that the language is universal and global is one of the most mentioned metonymic functions of the term 'English' in the poems. English is seen to connect people all over the world, but again, also takes on a more insidious quality of universality. It is seen to spread like an illness, virus or weed (*figure 4*).

Figure 4: Concordance lines for 'spread*'



The concordance has identified the ways the learners were able to creatively subvert expectations about language use. Drawing on frequency counts, another finding is that the corpus yields more positive terms in terms of positive vs negative connotations of English, (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: The ten most commonly used words with explicitly positive or negative connotations

Rank	**Frequency**	**words with positive connotations**	**Rank**	**Frequency**	**words with negative connotations**
83	10	delicious	191	4	difficult
102	8	good	201	4	hate
194	4	enjoy	247	3	disease
208	4	love	322	2	avoid
229	4	wonderful	357	2	destroy
234	3	beautiful	503	1	blame
236	3	better	511	1	bother
249	3	easy	550	1	confused
260	3	helps	565	1	dangerous
385	2	happy	566	1	dark

It is noteworthy that only the first five negative terms occur multiple times, whilst all ten of the positive terms occur more than once. The last five negative terms only occur once. Negative terms are often mitigated by a ‘however’ or ‘also’ in the same poem. This suggests that learners offer a mostly positive experience of learning English, which provides a means to connect and interact across boundaries – or, more pragmatically, as an essential requirement for a successful life.

4.1.2 Use of Metaphors: Uniqueness

The frequencies of words used in the corpus are, overall, relatively low, and many words are repeated within single poems (e.g. ‘magic’ occurs 7 times, but 5 times within the same poem (poem 6)). This points to the highly individualised use of unique expressions by the learners.

The use of common metaphors is also highly individualised. As mentioned above, whilst learners use a range of conventional conceptual metaphors, they are able to highlight the multiple incongruities of these metaphors, and thus subvert expectations. The double-take on expressions such as ‘English as a virus’ invites new perspectives on how learning English affects the writers’ experiences. As illustrated in *example 1*, learners are, indeed, able to manipulate language to show their own individual and unexpected take on language learning. The ambiguity of infection as a positive experience (cf. ‘infectious laughter’) disrupts the discourse of disease and culminates in the defiant tone of the last line ‘And I will be …’.

Example 1: Poem 27

I think English is like a virus.
Not bad virus, it's kind of good virus
It spread all over the world.
If someone begin to speak English,
Other people also begin to speak it.
It's like a virus
And I will be infected person

4.2 Literary Analysis

In response to the second question ‘In what ways can they provide a means of emancipation from ‘native’ English norms in their use of metaphorical language’ we investigated further in a more qualitative way to see how learners signal their creative take on learning English

through the task of writing a poem and using metaphors. For that purpose, two poems, chosen because of their explicitly defiant tone, are investigated more closely in their use of ambiguous and unexpected metaphorical language, which supports interpretations of learners as self-reflective and independent of 'native' norms.

Example 2: Poem 14

Unique code

Japanese English is like Unique Code

Japanese can understand Unique Code easily

However, people from different country sometimes can not

Understand it because it's too unique.

We Japanese have made a lot of Unique Code from English words.

We should think to make Unique Code better for making everyone understood

Unique Code will be understood by everyone someday.

Poem 14 displays a startling take on learning English by relating it to Japan's strength in computer science. The possible concatenation of 'Unique Code' to Unicode, the industry standard of handling writing systems, is relevant to Japan in many ways, not least because it allows for the use of Japanese characters on a computer, enabling their leading role in the digital revolution. The uniqueness furthermore refers to the way the Japanese use English. The writer suggests that people from the outside cannot understand Japanese English because it is 'too unique'. This ironically suggests that English as a *lingua franca* is not actually fit for purpose, since Japanese speakers cannot use it to communicate with other nationalities, only amongst themselves. However, the proposition is not that Japanese speakers should try to normalise their language. Instead, they should use their strengths to make everyone else more

attuned to Japanese English. This illustrates the strong sense of identity that this writer of the poem projects.

Example 3: Poem 3

The Wind

English is the Wind

Gentle breeze carries fresh air.

Violent storm destroys landscape.

Silence calm makes us feel alone.

The wind is blowing around the world.

Poem 3 looks at first glance a more conventional attempt, drawing on a more conformist 'poetic' language of nature imagery. The writer explores different aspects of English as wind. As a 'gentle breeze' it brings fresh air, enhancing quality of life. As a 'violent storm' it threatens life. So far, so predictable. However, the fourth line twists the expectations. 'Silence calm' seems preferable to the destructive potential of strong wind. Without wind, i.e. English, however, people are becalmed, unable to connect. The writer makes a point through poetic means that is subverted creatively. The ambiguities expressed in the matter-of-fact statement 'The wind is blowing …' leaves space for interpretation. The writer's voice is non-judgemental, and the manipulation of the imagery is unsettling. Whether threat or blessing, English is not framed in an obvious fashion.

Both quantitative corpus analysis and qualitative literary analysis of learner poems have found a strong emanation of individual voices, self-reflection and subversion of 'native norms'.

5. Discussion

GELT supports creative writing pedagogies as allowing language learners the development of an individual voice and negotiation of a robust multilingual identity. It encourages learners to draw on the multicompetences that their multilingualism affords. This creative writing project was introduced as part of an EAP course that utilised Global Englishes subject matter to enhance the learners' EAP skills, encourage creative language use and raise awareness of Global Englishes. As illustrated in the analysis, the poems were successful in showing learners' self-reflection and subversion of 'native' norms, thus potentially fostering the development of confident multilingual writers.

In the dialogic interaction between poetic self-expression and formal constraint, the poems demonstrated how learners were able to assert their own identity against the centripetal discourse of English (cf. Bakhtin, 1981). Through creative play with poetic expression, they were seen to manipulate conventional imagery into thoroughly original expressions of their own experiences with English (Belz, 2002), thereby subverting expectations. In this sense, the activity potentially met the course goals of encouraging critical reflection. However, not all poems showed such expressiveness in equal measures. The corpus as a whole, nevertheless, reflected a critical stance towards questions that surround global English language use. As such, it demonstrated that poetry has indeed an empowering potential for multilingual writers (Newfield and D'Abdon, 2015), which is conducive to GELT.

Learners were aware of being considered to have a deficit in English, where the rules and vocabularies "make us confused" (poem 30). But, as Kramsch (2006) indicates, the poems have demonstrated 'symbolic competence,' i.e. the ability to manipulate signs as a way to position themselves in the 'symbolic power game' of Global Englishes, signalling a largely positive attitude towards the use of English, without giving up their own cultural

strengths and individual positions. Language play, in this case the experimentation with metaphorical language, involves, as Cook (2000) outlines, a meaningful employment of learners' metalinguistic awareness and multicompetences. Learners did not, however, employ all weapons in their multilingual repertoire, as would be expected of bilingual creatives (Kachru, 1983). We note that only English was used, and there were not many overt references to Japanese rhetorical and poetical structures. It leads us to query whether learners merely conformed to expectations. Being in an EMI environment, learners were required to submit poems in English. Yet poem writing aims to encourage the development of language users risk-taking (Cranston, 2003). Hence the learners' 'risk' in the overtly 'English-only' environment of the Japanese classroom could be interpreted as a mediating strategy that covered a potential 'false compliance' to models of the dominant discourse (Pennycook, 2007). This possibility should be investigated further.

Many of the poems showed a range of solecisms, usually referred to as 'errors' in 'traditional' ELT curricula. This can cause, as Prodromou (2007) notes, consternation in the reception of the poems. These creative uses of language and the individualised and localised expression of meaning entail, as Canagarajah (2006) points out, a critique of the rules and conventions of English, as not all difference is "error" (603) . As Lazar (2015) proposes, this 'inaccurate' production of English may even broaden ideas of what is 'correct' into what is 'appropriate' to convey the sense intended by the learners. The traditional 'face' culture in Japan makes learners' opening up to the possible critique of 'wrong' expressions in the public poems doubly impressive. In this sense, poems may prove to be a useful awareness raising tool of how pedagogy can "deemphasise a strict adherence to rules and conventions" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 602). For example, grammatical constructions, such as 'It expands widely/It permeate for everyone' (poem 19), allow moments of ambiguity that blur the

differences e.g. between subject and object, transitive and intransitive, active and passive voice.

The use of creative writing activities clearly allows for a more holistic and experiential view of learners as emotional and moral beings. Their frequent recourse to hybrid formulations of Japanese English, or Japanese-English, opens up a third space in which these learners could stake out a sense of belonging. As Widdowson (1997, p. 139) notes, English "is not distributed as a set of established encoded forms, unchanged into different domains of use, but it is spread as a virtual language", which "implies adaptation and non-conformity" (p. 140). The poems are further evidence that English is not a "franchise language" (ibid.); as it spreads, "it gets adapted as the virtual language gets actualized in diverse ways, becomes subject to local constraints and controls" (ibid.). The study also highlights, however, that standard language ideology prevails, which has, in fact, been identified as one of the main barriers to GELT (Author 2 and Other, xx; Other and Author 2, xx).

Like others (e.g. Cranston, 2003; Hanauer, 2010; Newfield and D'Abdon, 2015; Iida, 2017), this research nevertheless reveals the abilities of learners to engage creatively with a second language and produce aesthetically complex texts. What this study shows in particular is that learners are able to reflect on the global spread of English and show a critical stance towards it. Advocates of GELT have been careful to emphasise the importance of the learners' context and needs (Author 2 and Other, xxx). As with critical pedagogy, emancipation is central and "GELT advocates a critical approach to ELT that recognises that theories may not translate well, and it aims to address power imbalances, not perpetuate them" (Author 2 and Other, xxx). In this study, the implications of the writing product suggest that the creative writing pedagogy provided space for learners' voices, and it is hoped

that these learners may approach subsequent EAP writing tasks with active engagement and awareness to the potential of their language use.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

We conclude with a call for both more studies to explore incorporating a GELT perspective into the ELT classroom and into the use of poetry to promote self-efficacy, self-direction and learner agency. The corpus used in this study was small and specialised and does not allow for generalisation. In fact, the idea is not to generalise, but to accept the poems as individual expression of self-reflection and subversion. The findings do, however, chime with cited research and elucidates the transferability of its insights to other contexts. It underpins the idea that creative writing tasks have the potential to encourage learners to go beyond the native speaker code. Creativity can help learners to shore up their sense of identity during the voice-threatening process of learning another language. Creative pedagogies highlight that the English language is not solely determined by rule-governed structures that demand conformity, but is open to dynamic ways of subversion.

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